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ETYMOLOGY.

GWR—GWRAIG—LLEW—CÆRE.

To the EDITOR of the CAMBRO-BRITON.

SIR,—You have, upon several occasions, alluded to the remarkable advantages, which the Welsh language offers to the inquiries of the philologist; and I have, for some time, been in expectation, that the *Essay on Etymology*, which appeared in your former volume, would be succeeded by some farther illustrations, in addition to those you then offered, of the justice of your position. As your design in this respect, however, remains hitherto unaccomplished, you will, perhaps, allow me so far to anticipate your purpose, as to present your readers with a few instances, that have recently occurred to me on this subject, and which may not be without their use in exemplifying those *phenomena* of the Welsh tongue, to which you have so often adverted. And they will, I hope, have the still farther effect of inducing some of your more able correspondents to extend their researches into a field of learning, which, however generally despised, is by no means, as might easily be proved, without its share of interest and advantage.

It will, I presume, be admitted, that, in the primeval period of the world, names were never adopted without some reasons, drawn from the characteristic nature of the objects, to which they were applied, and especially such names, as were appropriated to the most obvious and familiar ideas. Hence we find a certain degree of affinity, in most languages, between the various designations of the Deity, or of the Sun, which must have been among the first ideas, that forced themselves on the human mind, and to which, therefore, names must have been given when “the whole earth was of one language and of one speech.” Among this description of words there can be no doubt that we are to include the generic appellations, by which *man* and *woman* were originally distinguished. Accordingly, we find a singular degree of resemblance to prevail in most ancient languages on this point, however disguised by the accidents and fluctuations of time. But, as my present concern lies particularly with the Welsh tongue, I proceed to offer a few remarks on the names it employs upon this occasion, and also on the correspondence, which other ancient languages present in the same respect.

In Welsh, as in Greek and Latin, two words are used to express *man*: these are GWR and DYN*, the first corresponding with the *ανρ* and *vir* of those languages, and the other with their *ανδρωπος* and *homo*†. GWR, too, like the Latin *vir*, implies also a husband; as its feminine, GWRAIG, does a woman, or wife. It is on these two words that I now propose to submit a few observations.

GWR is stated, in Mr. Owen's Dictionary, to be a compound of the two radical terms GW and WR; implying, literally, a tendency to be over, above, or superior; and, accordingly, we find the latter of these primitive roots to enter into the composition of some other words, that have a similar signification, as, for example, of the words *twr*, a tower, and *gwrn*, a covering or top, in reference to certain vessels. We may, therefore, conclude, that GWR was originally adopted to denote *man's* superiority over the rest of the creation; and in this sense several writers also explain the etymology of the Hebrew *gabir* and the Chaldee *gevar*, both of them names for *man*, and which are generally allowed to be derived from a root, common to both dialects, signifying to exalt or make eminent‡. In Arabic, too, there are several words, apparently composed of the same original elements, which have an identity of signification with those here noticed. For instance, *kibar* signifies nobles, or men distinguished for wealth or knowledge,—*kubir* implies the chief of a family,—and *jebar* one pre-eminent, a sovereign or a con-

* Of all the kindred dialects of the Welsh the Cornish alone has preserved the first of these words in its primitive form. The Irish, as will be seen in the sequel, adopts it with some variation; but the Cornish, Irish, and Armorican retain the word DYN with little or no change, and the Manks tongue has *dyny*. It is singular, however, that the word is not to be traced into other languages as the name for a *man*.

† Upon the Greek and Latin names it may be curious to remark, that *ανρ* and *ανδρωπος* appear to stand alone, without any correspondent words in any other tongue, which can reasonably be pronounced as of the same origin. The Latin *vir*, of which the presumed etymon will be explained hereafter, has been borrowed by the Spaniards alone in their *varon*, while the French and Italians have founded their word upon *homo*; and it may also be observed, that the languages of these three nations, as well as most of the Teutonic dialects, employ but one word for *man*.

‡ The root of *gabir*, which means also a lord or master, is, according to some Hebrew scholars, *gabar*, which signifies to excel in greatness or power. And Mr. Parkhurst, in his Lexicon, thus explains the last-mentioned word.—“*Gabar*, to be strong, powerful; to prevail: a man is distinguished from a woman or child on account of his superior strength. As a noun, *Gabir*, a lord, master; fem. *Gabirh*, a lady, mistress.”—The Syriac language agrees also with the Hebrew and Chaldee in this instance.

queror. The conclusion, which I would draw from the correspondence on this point between the Oriental tongues and the Welsh, is, that the word *GWR* was, in all probability, among the primitive words of the ancient Cimbric, and derived immediately, with the Oriental terms above specified, from the original speech of mankind. Some critics have, indeed, conjectured, from the similarity between the Hebrew and Welsh words, in this as in other instances, that the former gave birth to the latter; but the analogies of the Welsh tongue seem to forbid this assumption, and to justify us, on the contrary, in concluding, as just surmised, that this occasional resemblance between the two languages was not mutually borrowed, but sprang from one common fountain.

Independent of the affinity between the Welsh and the Oriental tongues in this particular, a correspondence may also be traced with other languages, though to the general reader it may not be very perceptible, and which has even been passed without notice by those learned etymologists, who, confining their speculations to Greek and Latin, have wholly disregarded that more ancient tongue, in which alone the roots of many words in those languages are to be found. Thus I take it for granted, that the Latin *vir* is, in fact, but a variation of the Cimbric *GWR*, on a principle of literal mutation, extremely common, and whereby such old Welsh words, as *gwynt*, *gwir*, *gwylio*, and *gwenwyn*, become in Latin *ventus*, *verus*, *vigilo*, and *venenum*. And, it is somewhat singular, that the Irish, however differing from the Latin in its general properties, has adopted, in numerous cases, the same mutation, with the difference only of an *F* for a *V*, which, as the Irish does not use the last mentioned letter, is a difference more in form than reality. Thus, the Irish word for *man* is *fear*, and, in the Scottish dialect of the same language, *fèr*, both which words it requires no difficulty to identify with the *vir* of the Romans, all of them evidently corrupted from the old Cimbric *GWR*. Yet, so blind have etymologists been in this among numberless other instances, as to derive *vir* from the Latin *vis**, as if, in case of the words having any relation to each other, the latter were not far more likely to be the derivative, as

* Isidorus, who appears to have been the first to discover this notable secret, observes, that *vir* is derived from *vis*, "quòd major in eo vis est quàm feminis, unde et a viro virtus nomen accepit." In the last limb of his sentence he is correct, but, by no means, as a necessary conclusion from the preceding part.

virtus undoubtedly is, upon the same principle that *αἰδρία*, in Greek, is derived from *αἰνέ*, and *gwrol*, a hero, *gwrdd*, strong, and many other similar words in Welsh, are from the primary term *GWR*.

But, it will, I think, place the primitiveness of this word in a still stronger light, if we examine the etymology of *GWRAIG*, which implies, as already observed, a *woman* or *wife*. The consanguinity, if I may be allowed the expression, of these two terms must be obvious to the most common observer, and must, therefore, have had its source in the original principles of the language*. And, in fact, *GWRAIG* is formed by the addition to *GWR* of the primitive term *AIG*, which denotes, in an elementary sense, the producer of life, and, in its more limited significations, a female, a herd, or a shoal, while its plural, *EIGION*, is used for the ocean, all of these secondary senses having thus a manifest reference to the primary or fundamental idea. It is, by no means, unreasonable, then, to infer, that *GWR* and *GWRAIG* are genuine Cimbric words, since it is unnecessary to travel out of the language to give a clear and rational account of their origin; while of the Irish *fear* and *frag*, which are used synonymously with them, it is impossible to find in that language any plausible etymology, a circumstance, which proves them to be corrupted from the Welsh. Nor have I any doubt, that the Latin *virago* is also a metamorphosis of the Welsh *GWRAIG*, upon the system already adverted to, notwithstanding that perversion of the original meaning in the Latin†, of which all languages furnish abundant examples.

Among the numerous words, which bear a resemblance in various languages, and particularly the more ancient, that, used to express a *lion*, is somewhat remarkable. In Welsh the word is *LLEW*, in Hebrew *laish*, in Greek *λεων*, in Latin *leo*, in Irish *leovan*, and in the other cognate dialects, which are called Celtic, the same similarity is observable. Now, the Latin and Greek lexicographers, in their visionary speculations in the region of

* The Hebrew words *ish* and *isha*, employed to denote *man* and *woman*, present a similar correspondence, as indeed do the English words themselves, and which cannot have been merely accidental. The Latin language, too, as will be seen in the sequel, has also preserved this natural affinity.

† *Virago*, it is well known, implies, in Latin, a *heroine*, or *masculine woman*; and in this sense the English have adopted it. Isidorus, with his usual discernment, discovers the etymology of the word to be "quod ut vir agat," because she acts the part of a man. But *non omnia videt Aristarchus*.

etymology, derive this word, according to their several caprices, one from a Hebrew word, signifying strong, another from an old Greek term for king, but the greatest number, with a singular sagacity, from the Greek verb *λᾶν*, to see, because the *lion* is "most terrible to behold." It is surely unnecessary to dwell on the absurdity of this etymology, which would apply with equal justice to a beautiful, as to a terrible, aspect, and can, at all events, have no peculiar reference to the *lion*. We must, therefore, look somewhere else for the probable origin of this appellation. Among the varieties, which I have enumerated of it in different languages, it will, perhaps, be acknowledged, that the Welsh term **LLEW** is distinguishable for its simplicity, as embracing no more than a single articulation, to which, or at most to the simplest combinations, the first language must have been confined. This word, simple as it is, Mr. Owen, in his Dictionary, conceives to be a compound of the two still more primitive sounds, **LLY** and **EW**, and thus to signify, in its elementary sense, a swallow or devourer, and, by analogy, to have been appropriated to a *lion*.

In confirmation of this surmise, the verb *llewa*, to swallow or devour, may be adduced, and which frequently occurs in the poets. Thus Taliesin—

Llewais wirawd
Gwin a bragawd.

Of beverage I swallowed
Wine and bragot.

To this I might add several other instances of words of a similar construction, still preserving the primary idea,—as *llewydd*, a focus, or point to which any thing verges,—*llwch*, a lake, or influx of water,—and *llwnc*, a gulp, a swallow, or, more particularly, the gullet, all of which may be resolved into the same elementary roots as the word **LLEW**; and it will not be denied, that voracity forms an appropriate characteristic of this animal. I should, therefore, be disposed to set down the Greek and Latin names as no more than variations of the old Cimbric word, thus preserved in the Welsh, and of which the etymology is at once easy and natural.

Before I conclude my letter, already, I fear, swollen to an inconvenient bulk, I beg to make one other etymological speculation, which will, at least, have the merit of novelty, if it have no other, to recommend it. During a late perusal of the *Æneid* I

was much struck with the name of a town, called CÆRE, mentioned in the eighth book, and which the poet thus introduces,—

“Haud procul hinc saxo colitur fundata vetusto
Urbis Agyllinæ sedes, ubi Lydia quondam
Gens, bello præclara, jugis insedit Etruscis*.”

and which he farther describes in the following passage:—

“Est ingens gelidum lucus prope Cæritis amnem,
Relligionis patrum latè sacer; undique colles
Inclusere cavi, et nigrâ nemus abiete cingunt.
Sylvano fama est veteres sacrasse Pelasgos,
Arvorum pecorisque Deo, lucumque diemque,
Qui primi fines aliquando habuere Latinos†.”

Of these two extracts I shall now, for the sake of the general reader, subjoin Dryden’s version:—

“Not far from hence there stands a hilly town,
Of ancient building and of high renown,
Torn from the Tuscans by the Lydian race,
Who gave the name of Cære to the place,
Once Agyllina called.”——

* * * * *

“A greenwood shade, for long religion known,
Stands by the streams, that wash the Tuscan town,
Incompassed round with gloomy hills above,
Which add a holy horror to the grove:
The first inhabitants, of Grecian blood,
That sacred forest to Sylvanus vow’d,
The guardian of their flocks and fields,—they pay
Their due devotions on his annual day.”

Servius, the celebrated commentator on Virgil, in a note upon the extract first cited, makes a singular observation, which I shall here translate.—“Agylla, a Tuscan city, was so called,” he says, “from its founder Agella, but afterwards, owing to the ignorance of the Romans, received a different appellation. For, as the Romans were on their way through Tuscany, they enquired the name of the city, but the inhabitants, who were Greeks, not understanding the question, and being moreover desirous of cultivating the friendship of the Romans, addressed them by the Greek salutation, *Xεῖρε*, which the Romans mistook for the name of the town, and so, dropping the aspirate, called the place afterwards CÆRE.”

* Æneid. 8. l. 495.

† Ib. l. 579.

Such is the account, which Servius gives of the origin of this name, and upon the various improbabilities of which it is not necessary to waste a remark. Subsequent commentators seem to have rejected the explanation, professing, at the same time, their inability to supply the genuine etymology. Now, if I might be allowed to offer my humble opinion on this subject, I would observe, that, as *CÆRE* is stated to have been anciently settled by strangers, and whom other authors describe, I believe, as having come originally from the confines of Gaul, it is not very improbable, that, although called Greeks, they may have been of some Cimbric tribe, and, consequently, that the original name of the city was *CAER*, which implies to this day, in Welsh, a strong fortified post, and was the name, by which several British towns were anciently known, and, most probably, some also in Gaul*. The situation, too, of *CÆRE*, as described by Virgil, agrees with such an appellation; and the other circumstances of the "sacred grove," and the ancient religion of the inhabitants, may be considered by some to mark their Druidical origin, and, consequently, to fortify my hypothesis, although this is a point, on which I have no wish, at present, to express an opinion. I will merely add, therefore, that the modern name of this town is *Car-veteri*, which seems to retain the original designation, with the addition of a word to mark its antiquity.

Allow me, in conclusion, to solicit, that some of your correspondents, who are versed in Cimbric lore, will favour the public, through the medium of the *CAMBRO-BRITON*, with the proper etymologies of the four ancient provinces of Wales,—*Dyfed*, *Gwent*, *Gwynedd*, and *Powys*. If, however, no one, better qualified than myself, should comply with this request, I will, in my next, hazard some conjectures on the subject, together with a few remarks on the woful blunders, into which English etymologists have fallen on this very point, and which, with their general mistakes in similar matters, are to be ascribed to their ignorance of that ancient language, in which the seeds of philological learning are to be found in their purest and most primitive state.

CELTA.

* The Welsh word, *CAER*, is a derivative of *Cae*, to enclose, and consequently implies a city surrounded with walls and other means of defence. It formed the ancient British name of those English towns, which now terminate with *cester*, *cister*, or *chester*, as well as of many others. It is probable too, that the names of several ancient towns in other parts of the world, among which may be mentioned *Carthage*, were originally formed of the word *CAER*.